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ABSTRACT

Empowering teacher induction programs are developmental in nature and generally have similar philosophical orientations. They identify and meet the instructional, non-instructional, and empowerment needs of novice teachers. Induction programs that empower include the following elements: development of personal strengths and ideas; defined rationales and goals; provision of continuous year-long support aimed at breaking down isolation and building cooperation, collaboration, and collegiality; and efforts to increase the beginning teacher's knowledge base, through such means as special inservice, networking, peer coaching, and mentoring. Such induction programs utilize a wide variety of personnel, materials, instruments, and activities designed to identify and address the personal and professional needs of beginning teachers. They allow the beginning teacher to take risks by developing creative teaching ideas and new personalized ways of making a difference with students, and they motivate the beginning teacher to control his/her own professional growth through participatory decision making activities. Empowering induction holds that by giving voice to the professional ideas and concerns of beginning teachers, the profession will be dignified, humanized, and equipped to develop committed professionals who will have an effective influence on students. (LL)

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Empowering Beginning Teachers Through Developmental Induction

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Empowering first year teachers with the motivation and the structure to assess their needs and take charge of their professional development is an induction orientation that will serve education well as it moves into the 21st century. As more and more school administrators realize that empowering teachers with site-based decision making usually leads to a more student-centered, responsive fulfillment of the school's mission, so too is education coming to see the benefits of developing its new staff through induction that empowers.

Empowering induction programs, though diverse in structure, are developmental in nature and usually have common philosophical orientations. These programs see the beginning teacher as having a set of skills and, as a result of the program activities, develop, support, extend, or refine these skills. Empowering programs base their assistance on the perceived personal and professional needs of the beginning teacher, not on the sole evaluation of others. They allow the first year teacher to express needs and offer a number of vehicles to motivate the meeting of these needs, taking the orientation that to truly improve one must first see a need and have a desire to improve. In essence, empowering induction could be considered as a mutifaceted, needs-based system of activities designed to developmentally support the personal and professional growth of beginning teachers.

To allow for this growth, a host of materials and activities are situationally used to identify and address the needs. Induction programs that empower will usually tend to:

1. have a developmental philosophy with a defined set of rationales and goals that are oriented to addressing the situational needs of beginning teachers;

2. provide continuous year-long support aimed at breaking down isolation and building cooperation, collaboration and collegiality;

3. increase the knowledge base of the beginning teacher through special inservice, networking, peer coaching, and various other support mechanisms;

4. use a vast array of personnel, materials, instruments, and activities designed to identify and address the personal and professional needs of beginning teachers;

5. allow the beginning teacher to take risks by developing creative teaching ideas and new personalized ways of making a difference with students;

6. motivate the beginning teacher to control his own professional growth through participatory decision making activities.

In essence, empowering induction programs emphasize the belief that the closer the induction activities are aligned to the perceived needs of the beginning teacher, the higher the probability they will likely impact effectively on the student.

Induction Research

Today, thirty-three states have mandated some form of state induction and twenty-three states have formally implemented programs (Brown, Peterson, & Weis, 1990). To strengthen the continued possibility of funding, most of these programs have aspects of accountability built into their effort to improve instructional/ management skills and operate from a deficit

model. Locally, however, hundreds of district or county wide programs have sprouted and offer perhaps the best chance of empowering beginning teachers, for it is here that the instinct to provide situational support and individualization seems the highest.

Empowering beginning teachers with a coordinated, needs-based system of support seems to have a backing in the research. Just to mention a few:

1. Positive changes occurred on a variety of teaching skills when beginning teachers were supported by an induction program (Elsner, 1987; Morockie and Looney, 1988; Summers, 1987).

2. Inducted teachers had significantly higher perceptions about education than those who had no support (Huling-Austin and Murphy, 1987; Summers, 1987).

3. Beginning teachers each had different personality needs and behavioral tendencies and were influenced by the school climate (Runyan, 1988).

4. The most effective induction programs personalized and individualized support to the needs of beginning teachers (Grant and Zeicher, 1981).

5. Emotional support was one of the most beneficial elements in an induction program (Odell, 1986).

6. One of the basic skills for developing as an effective teacher is the ability to seek out material and resources to develop effective teaching practices (Hanley and Swick, 1983).

7. Teachers are their own best resources for identifying and resolving their own problems (Greenburg, 1980).

Though research on beginning teacher induction is still developing, it seems only logical that one of the most viable approaches to developing future professional educators is through

a needs-based, multifaceted induction program. To do this, there are specific program components and mentor activities that will motivate and empower beginning staff to effectively shape their own development as professional educators. The size, geographical restrictions, and financial resources of the school system will, of course, influence the scope of the components.

Organizational Induction Programs Components

Most empowering induction programs move beyond simple orientation to the school system to the more developmental endeavors of self-evaluation and collegial assistance in a host of areas. Empowering induction will have a basic philosophy of providing positive, collegial support to the situational concerns and needs of each beginning teacher. Forming the basis for the program's goals, empowering induction programs also will develop a sound rationale towards retention, recruitment, professional competence, instructional quality, school climate, and professional growth expectations. Derived from this philosophical orientation and rationale, the specific goals will highlight the empowering characteristics of the program. Possible empowering goals might be:

1. to provide an orderly, personalized transition from preservice preparation to the first year of teaching;

2. to recruit and retain competent professionals interested in professional development;

3. to provide additional knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for successful professional growth;

4. to help interpret and cope with the needs and concerns that are individually perceived by the beginning teacher;

5. to build a foundation for continued positive professional development through a structured link of mentors, administrators and teacher educators; and

6. to help first year teachers overcome the sometimes negative school climate and develop their own self-image, self-confidence, positive attitude, and concern for children.

Well developed, empowering induction programs also delineate specific organizational details. The identification of clients, the time span of the program, compensation for participants, and other administrative and personnel arrangements are clearly defined in the program description. In effective programs, distinct lines of responsibility are established to ensure the implementation and quality of the program. Particularly important in the personnel arrangements are the selection criteria for mentors, mentor training methods, and the mentor personal and professional focus areas with the beginning teacher. Permeating these organizational frameworks and mentor arrangements is the basic idea of empowering the beginning teacher to control his own professional development.

Empowering Induction Components

To allow for beginning teacher empowerment, the specific induction components are usually organized as a package to provide a coordinated, needs-based system aimed at enabling situational personal and professional growth. To provide this multifaceted, growth-oriented program that strives to identify and address the needs of beginning teachers, a number of activities will usually be found (Runyan and Buche, 1991).

Developmental mentoring will be a basic program component in which experienced, positive teachers are selected, compensated, trained, and focused to support a first year teacher in his/her professional development. Serving a number of roles and interacting daily with the beginning teacher, the mentor's primary goal will be to develop a self-sufficient professional, capable of performing all the duties of a healthy, effective educator. To reach this goal, mentors will be trained in, and have at their disposal, various program checklists and activity timelines, Rogerian counseling abilities, classroom observation techniques, videotaping strategies, and self-assessment instruments.

Administrative Support will be present and possibly involve providing extra materials and resources, increased planning time, smaller class loads, and frequent informal (as well as formal) classroom visits and feedback. So often, through the extra administrative support needed in creating a realistic atmosphere for beginning teacher success, the potential for positive professional development is greatly enhanced.

Orientation Sessions, held before school starts, will help familiarize the beginning teacher with the procedures, expectations and personnel of the school system so that the first day of class is less stressful. Most beneficial when held a month before school, the sessions are usually designed to develop a common, positive belief system in the ritual, culture, rules, regulations and procedures of the school system.

Support Seminars, held throughout the school year, will allow beginning teachers the opportunity to discuss concerns, explore instructional techniques, and investigate management topics. These sessions, which are usually held off school premises, help develop a comradeship needed in honest, personalized growth and provide another vehicle for developing a common knowledge base.

Social Functions, again held at various times throughout the school year, will help beginning teachers develop collegial relationships in non-academic environments. These events help break down the isolated teaching environment so destructive to beginning teachers.

Peer Observations, through which the beginning teacher is allowed release time to visit, observe, and acquire material from other teachers, will help the neophyte broaden his perspectives and provide for positive role modeling.

Need Assessment Tools will be available and used. These various activities will allow the beginning teacher to reflect upon and self-assess various instructional and non-instructional areas. Usually considered as need assessment tools are various instructional and non-instructional checklists, mentor interaction timelines, self-assessment instruments, targeted thought questions, surveys, student and principal assessments, video-taping, and mentor observation feedback. Used developmentally throughout the year, these instruments offer a vehicle for targeting needs and encouraging communication between beginning teacher and mentor.

Handbook Support, designed to provide information on the school system's induction program, school policies, instructional focuses, and student support services will provide a foundation for a common knowledge base from which the beginning teacher can expand. Articles on classroom management, instructional methods, and other useful information could be included to develop this common knowledge base.

Newsletter Support will be used to communicate program information, instructional tips, staff activities, and beginning teacher successes. These monthly newsletters are useful in developing pride and communicating successful activities.

College Courses, especially designed for the beginning teacher, could be excellent vehicles for developing the knowledge base of the beginning teacher and expanding the scope of the program.

Portfolio Development, which could include descriptions of classroom expectations, course syllabi, unique teaching units, assessment material, formal evaluation summaries, and special activities, will allow the beginning teacher to visually observe and record his professional development.

All of these activities combine to provide a continuous support system that, in different ways, allows the beginning teacher to control and participate in his own development. As a whole, they provide a number of vehicles which allow knowledge acquisition, personal need identification, and individual skill development.

Professional and Personal Focus

To offer a broad focus, empowering induction programs also structure each of the above components to address both professional and personal needs. Many times aligned with research-based stages of beginning teacher development, the professional concerns are focused in a loose chronological sequence, yet are addressed situationally as the need is expressed. Usually considered within the professional domain of program support are the areas of school and community adjustment, classroom preparation and management, legal and ethical concerns, lesson organization, instructional techniques, student relationships and evaluation, and intuition development. In organizing these domains, certain survival skills are explored first, followed by explorations into the science of teaching and finally into the art of teaching.

Just as important as the professional concerns are the personal concerns of the beginning teacher. Usually considered within the personal domain are the areas of adjusting to the realities of teaching, becoming familiar with the community, managing time, relieving self-doubts, building new relationships, finding value in teaching, adjusting to new roles, and balancing home and school demands. Special consideration should be given to these personal areas, for if the beginning teacher does not personally adjust to the new occupation, the chance for long-term professional development is diminished.

Summary

In essence, empowering induction programs are developmental in nature and are structured around situationally supporting the personal and professional concerns of the first year teacher. These programs try to identify and meet the instructional and non-instructional needs of beginning teachers; not just giving them a dose of standard pedagogy and evaluating them on the "golden rules." They try to develop personal strengths and ideas to help change education for the better, not stifling the idealism of first year teachers by legislating dependency on accepted methods and materials. Empowering induction programs propose that by meeting the personal and professional needs of first year teachers the probability of retaining professional personnel who strive to master the art of teaching is greatly enhanced. As developmental programs, empowering induction simply holds that by giving a voice to the professional ideas and concerns of beginning teachers, the profession will be dignified, humanized, and equiped to develop committed professionals.

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